

# The Disciple



*The Good News of St. John soars like an eagle!*

*St. John's United Church of Christ  
Allentown, Pennsylvania*

Volume 26 Issue 7

July 2026

Howdy St. John's Family,

This month we are diving deep into the tribe of Gad; you'll be *Gad* you did! Remember last month when we talked about Rachel giving her handmaiden Bilhah to Jacob so that Bilhah could have children for Rachel? Gad was born into a similar situation, as he is the seventh son of Jacob and born by Leah's handmaiden Zilpah. Something different happens with Zilpah though, as we see in Genesis 30:9,11 that she is later listed as one of the wives of Jacob. In the Hebrew language we see that *Gad* means luck or fortunate.

After the exodus out of Egypt and the desert wandering, Gad settles on the eastern side of the Jordan River. One of the interesting stories about this tribe comes in 1 Samuel, when we see King Nahash of Ammon attack the tribes of Gad and Reuben and give them a choice; they can surrender and have their right eyes gouged out, or they can die by the sword. They are given seven days to consider this, and so the tribes reach out to the rest of the tribes of Israel for help. Upon hearing this, a young herdsman named Saul (yes, that Saul), and he gathers an army and defeats Nahash. Why the right eye? This was a way to ensure that the Israelites would not be able to fight back against them with weapons, but it would also be a humiliation to them among the other nations.

We see in the books of Joshua and Numbers that the tribe of Gad is quick to come to the defense of others as well. The lesson that I will be taking away from studying Gad is that it is important to ask for help when you need it! This can be an exceptionally challenging lesson for some of us, myself included. When we see Gad ask for help, they receive it, and then they are able to help others as the story continues. May this lesson be a blessing to you as well.

-Respectfully submitted by Pastor Becky Sausser

## **Ask in August!**

Next month is August, and you know what that means! It is time to send your questions and suggestions to Pastor Becky for the August sermon series! Every August, people from the congregation share their questions or ideas of what topic they would like to hear about in a sermon. You can send your questions and suggestions to Pastor Becky via email, or you can submit them in writing to the office.

-Respectfully submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser

## **July's Special Mission Offering**

Our Special Mission Offering for July is the Allentown Ecumenical Foodbank. This ministry of the Lehigh Conference of Churches strives to assist people in the Lehigh Valley who are experiencing food insecurity. It is the only Foodbank in the Valley open five days a week. Currently, the Foodbank provides 3-5 days of food to over 450 households per week. St. John's has a long and vital association with the Foodbank providing both financial and food donations as well as volunteer support.

In July we would urge you to consider anyone, or more, of these. While donations of packaged or canned non-expired foodstuffs are accepted, financial donations are preferred. This is because they are able to procure more items per dollar than we can and they can purchase items that they need. You may donate anytime in July using your weekly offering envelope, the blue pew envelope (with both of these be sure to designate the Foodbank) or the Donate button on our website. Foodstuffs may be placed in the Foodbank Bin in the narthex.

You might also consider joining our current group of volunteers who help at the Foodbank on the 1st Thursday and 4th Friday. To find out more about volunteering, you can contact Nancy Kramer-Moyer.

Thank you for considering to help in continuing St. John's support of this vital ministry.

Submitted by Bill Falla

## **Bible Bites**

with Pastor Becky



### **Bible Bites**

When reading the Bible, it can sometimes be challenging to hold our scientific understanding of how the world works. Like, for example, we see that in the book of Genesis 1:6-8 some translations reference an expanse or a "dome" separating the ocean and the sky. The working theory at the time was that there was a big dome that made our sky, which we now know is our atmosphere, and not a literal dome. But sometimes we get beautiful poetry that leaves me affirming that scripture must have been divinely inspired, like Job 26:7, where it talks about God placing the earth upon nothing. Earth remains stable in orbit through the gravitational force exerted by the sun, seemingly hanging on nothing. If you are looking for a wonderful passage to study, check out the entire chapter of Job 26.

-Respectfully submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser

## **Lehigh Valley PRIDE!**

Come join us on Sunday, August 30, from 2-7pm at the SteelStacks (101 Founders Way, Bethlehem, Pa.) for Lehigh Valley Pride! Sponsored by the Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, we will once again join with the other Open & Affirming churches from the Penn Northeast Conference to remind our LGBT+ siblings that Jesus loves them! If you are interested in helping to run the booth, please contact Pastor Becky for the link to the virtual sign-up sheet. See you there!

## **July Sermons**

- July 5
  - Title: Discernment
  - Reading 1: Acts 2:43-47
  - Reading 2: Acts 4:32-37
  - In these passages from Acts we see the early church begin to form. Our sermon explores the way that our church is living into this church identity.
- July 12
  - Title: Listening
  - Reading 1: Acts 8:26-39
  - The story of Philip dovetails with Peter's conversation with a centurion. What can these stories show us about listening? How do these stories show up in our church?
- July 19
  - Title: Sending
  - Reading 1: Acts 13:1-3
  - Reading 2: Acts 14:21-28
  - This week we see Barnabus and Saul being commissioned to go out into the world, and we see their return.
- July 26
  - Title: Flexibility
  - Reading 1: Acts 27:39-28:10
  - Paul remains nimble and flexible as plans suddenly change on his journey to Rome. What lessons can we learn from this story?

## **Announcements**

### **Important Dates!**

- **July 18- Summer Fellowship 5-7pm in our social hall!**
- **August 30- Lehigh Valley Pride 1-7pm at the Steele Stacks**

## **Tales from the Resource Room**

Our Resource Room has helped us connect with our neighbors in new and incredible ways over the last few years. I wanted to share some of the incredible stories of how our congregation has made connections with our wider community to unite in our mission! Dennis and Nancy Blankowitsch are an incredible example of this connectivity! They made a connection with First Presbyterian in Frankford, Delaware, a church that has a thrift shop that has essential items like shoes and underwear. Dennis and Nancy shared our mission with them, and they provided several pairs of underwear and shoes for our Resource Room! Thank you, Dennis and Nancy, for making this connection and helping us restock the Resource Room!

Please consider making a monetary donation to our Resource Room for our tent drive! Camping tents are a highly needed item right now for our community and if we have 10 people donating \$20, we can purchase 10 tents! Try saying that 5 times fast! Donations should be marked "resource room" on the envelope. Thank you!

-Respectfully submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser

## **Mountain Valley Association O&A Churches Participating in Lehigh Valley Pride 2026**

The Mountain Valley Association of the United Church of Christ is excited to participate in Lehigh Valley Pride 2026, hosted by the Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center. The annual celebration will take place on August 30, 2026, from 1-7PM, at the ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks in Bethlehem and is expected to welcome thousands of attendees from across the region.

As part of our commitment to extravagant welcome and inclusion, the Mountain Valley Association will host a table during the event. Volunteers from O&A churches will be present to share information about Open and Affirming congregations, provide resources about the United Church of Christ, and offer a welcoming presence to LGBTQ+ individuals, families, and allies. Participation in Lehigh Valley Pride reflects the Association's belief that all people are beloved children of God and that the church is called to stand alongside those seeking justice, dignity, and belonging. Through its presence at Pride, the local churches hope to build relationships, celebrate diversity, and witness to God's inclusive love in the wider community.

The planning committee is currently meeting to finalize the details of the Association's participation. In the coming weeks, be on the lookout for ways to volunteer and sign up for opportunities. Whether you can help staff the table, greet visitors, distribute materials, or simply join us in celebrating, your participation is welcome. Pride is more than an event, it is a joyful expression of community, belonging, and God's inclusive love. We invite everyone to consider being part of this amazing, joy-filled, and welcoming celebration as we stand together in faith, hope, and love.

Submitted by Amanda Muschett

## **FREEDOM SCHOOL ALMOST WASN'T**

As of mid-May James Lawson Freedom School at Resurrected Life UCC seemed like it may not happen this summer season!! Then the Rev. Denise Edwards of Resurrected Life reached out to Delia Mitchell who has headed the program the last several years. Delia is working full-time at the District Attorney's office, but because of her love for Freedom School and the children, she agreed to facilitate it again this season.

There will be 60 scholars attending from June 22 until July 31. Monday through Friday, 8am to 1pm, the scholars(students) attend school, have breakfast, a snack, and lunch. On the final day, in the evening, there will be a ceremony when the children share their learning, and every child goes home with six books. Kindergarten thru 8th grade are eligible to attend. Delia has hired a site coordinator to oversee the day-to-day workings, and chosen four servant interns, two teachers, and two folks from United Way. The servant interns attended training in Tennessee June 1 to 6 with Delia. The theme this year is "Mental Health and Wellness". Reading, educational field trips, leadership skills are all part of the learning process. The Educational Defense Fund has supplied dozens of attractive new books for the various reading levels. The DaVinci Center participates actively in Freedom School.

St. John's has supported this program in the past. If anyone wishes to contribute time or money to this program, speak to Nancy Kramer-Moyer.

-Submitted by Nancy Kramer-Moyer.

## **A Summary of the Keystone Conference's First Annual Meeting**

The first weekend in June, I had the privilege of attending the first Annual Meeting of the Keystone Conference, and I left with a heart overflowing with gratitude, hope, JOY, and excitement for what God is doing among us.

From the moment worship began on Friday evening, there was a sense that something special was happening. Rev. Dr. Marcia McFee guided us through a meaningful and Spirit-filled worship experience that brought people together from across the Conference, focusing on the meeting's theme of "Joy at the table." During that worship service, we received a blessing from our General Minister and President, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, were inspired by a powerful sermon from Mountain Valley Association and Allentown's very own Rev. Dr. Gregg Edwards, and witnessed the visual coming together of our four conferences as a puzzle that was assembled by four lay members, one from each historical conference. Sharing communion around tables of churches, pastors, lay leaders, and members from many different backgrounds came together as one body. It created an intimate sense of community, while the music and congregational singing lifted our spirits. There was an inspiring spirit of unity.

One of the highlights of the weekend was hearing from Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding. His presentation masterfully blended public policy, Scripture, and personal stories of farm life. As someone who focuses on the connection between faith and service and comes from life on a farm, I was deeply moved by the way he spoke about hunger, food systems, and our shared responsibility to care for our neighbors. It is rare to hear a public official

speak so openly and thoughtfully about faith, and his words left a lasting impression on many of us. His statements were directly connected to the Conference's People of the Table initiative, which St. John's participated in. The results of the 50 Days of Easter Challenge were remarkable. Together, as a conference, we collected 6,000 cans of fruits and vegetables, 8,000 cans of pasta and soup, 2,000 cans of meat and fish, 5,000 toiletries and household items, and more than 1,300 jars of peanut butter and jam. Churches also gathered thousands of additional items, including pet food, baby food, bread, and fresh eggs. What struck me most was that these numbers represent only a portion of the connection the local church has to its communities across the commonwealth. It reminded me that the Church continues to be a powerful force for compassion and justice. In addition to what was collected by the local church, the participants at the Keystone Conference collected 251 pounds of rice, 142 pounds of beans, and over \$2,000 for the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank.

We were also honored to hear from Mary Luti. She reminded us that communion is far more than a ritual remembrance of Jesus' last meal with his disciples; it is an act of holy resistance. By gathering diverse people at one table, Communion resists the social barriers that separate the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, the insider and the outsider. Communion becomes both a remembrance of Christ's self-giving love and a call to embody that love through acts of justice, hospitality, and solidarity with the marginalized. As I reflect on the weekend, I am grateful not only for the workshops, presentations, and worship but also for the sense of community that formed. The Holy Spirit was present among us in our worship, our conversations, our service, and our shared vision for the future. Our first Annual Meeting was more than a conference gathering; it was a sacred experience. I left encouraged, energized, and hopeful for the journey ahead together and as the local church.

Submitted by Amanda Muschett

# July 2026



3 – Eric  
Bronfenbrenner  
12 – Joan Moran  
Judy Krapf  
13 – Florence DeLong  
Allan Kramer-  
Moyer  
28 – Nicholas King  
29 – Stacey Clifton  
31 – Joni Brensinger



July 16 – Eric and Caryn Bronfenbrenner  
July 26 – Richard and Joni Brensinger

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9am Prayer Call	2 Food Bank	3	4
5 10:00am Worship	6	7 Elders Meeting 7pm	8 9am Prayer Call	9	10	11
12 10:00am Worship	13	14	15 9am Prayer Call	16	17	18
19 10:00am Worship	20	21	22 9am Prayer Call	23	24 Food Bank	25
26 10:00am Worship	27	28	29 9am Prayer Call	30	31	

Check out our website: <https://stjohnsuccallentown.org/>

Follow us on Facebook by searching St. John's UCC Allentown (our logo is a picture of the church).

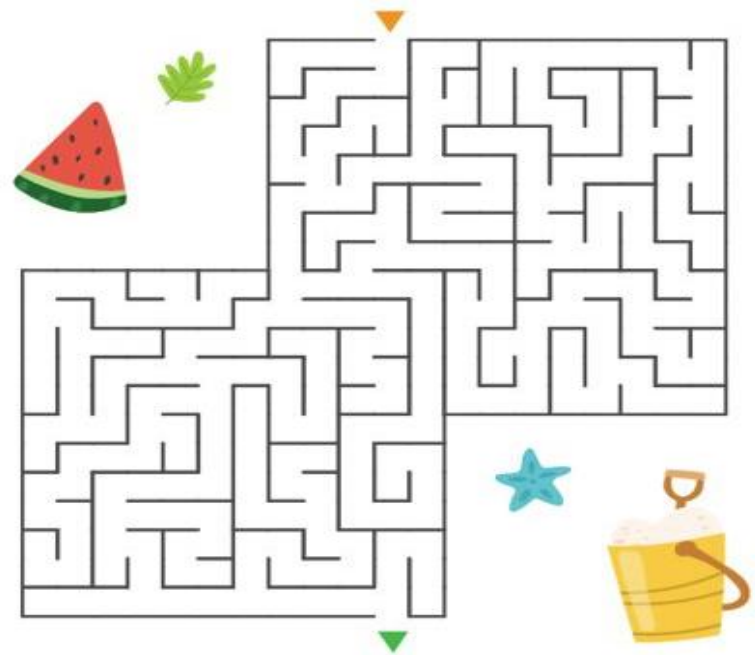


# Fourth of July

## WORD SEARCH



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STARS  
 FIREWORKS  
 BARBECUE  
 PICNIC  
 FLAG

FREEDOM  
 FOURTH  
 STRIPES  
 NATION

JULY  
 WATERMELON  
 FAMILY  
 HOLIDAY

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